

What Will Keep Today's Teachers Teaching? Looking for a Hook as a New Career Cycle Emerges

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Context: Drawing from Ingersoll's (2001) study of teacher attrition, Huberman's (1989) study of the professional life cycle of teachers, and recent retention/attrition literature across the professions, this study seeks to make sense of the complexities of cotemporary teachers' careers in light of changes in social and economic forces, the relationships between political and educational institutions, and the work of teaching over the past 20 years.

Study Purpose and Focus: The empirical part of this study explores how teachers with 4–6 years' experience conceive of their career path in education, as well as ways that universities and schools can better partner to increase teacher job satisfaction. It also provides professional development and opportunities for growth as teacher educators, examining any potential benefits to these teachers, their schools, and the interns they work with.

Participants and Setting: Seven teachers with 4–6 years' experience in one school district in the Pacific Northwest were selected as participants and mentor teachers. The main research questions were: How do teachers with 4–6 years of teaching conceive of their career path? Does taking on a teacher educator role via hosting an intern impact their long-term career plans?

Throughout the 2004–2005 school year, led by the principal investigator (PI), the seven teachers participated in a variety of activities designed to support (and simultaneously study) their development as teachers and teacher educators, including workshops and seminars. Additionally, the PI created a website discussion board so that the teachers could share ideas, experiences, concerns, and questions in between the group meetings. Teachers also participated in two 45-minute individual interviews—once at the beginning, and once at the end of the school year.

Research Design and Data Analysis: With the retention/attrition literature inside and outside education as a framework, this was an exploratory qualitative study. Data included field notes, website and e-mail artifacts, and interview transcripts. Data analysis began

with a list of initial descriptive codes, and then moved toward refining and developing new codes outside the initial list, ultimately linking codes into categories and themes. Analytical memos fostered the development of categories related to teachers' perceived professional need for greater stimulation in the classroom and beyond.

Findings: *Findings include that teachers with 4–6 years' experience are searching for roles/activities that are regenerative (keeping them learning and excited about their teaching); and also generative (widening their sphere of influence, sharing their gifts with others in the profession). Further, the mentor teacher role may be uniquely suited to synergistically provide both regenerative and generative opportunities.*

Conclusions: *The paper concludes with three potential areas of exploration for both educational practice and research concerned with keeping "good teachers" teaching—merit pay, differentiated jobs, and university-school partnerships.*

INTRODUCTION

This paper begins with a theoretical exploration of teacher retention and attrition, looking at historical and recent educational research as well as the retention/attrition literature from other fields. Then, drawing from these theoretical frames, I argue that the period of 4–6 years of teaching experience is now the crucial time when the most talented teachers decide to stay or leave. These are not necessarily the same teachers who are oft-cited as leaving teaching within five years (see Ingersoll, 2001) due to stress or their feeling ill-prepared, but are ones who have adjusted quickly to the profession and are now facing boredom and routine along with stress and frustration. I then share results from an exploratory empirical study of teachers with 4–6 years of teaching experience who were given an opportunity to mentor a new teacher, examining whether such teacher educator roles earlier in their career impacted teacher job satisfaction.

HUBERMAN'S HEURISTIC REVISITED

With the understanding that any theory of "stages" of development by years or age is merely a template for understanding, and that the experience of actual human beings is fluid and context-dependent, Huberman's influential (1989) study of the professional life cycle of teachers in Switzerland provides an initial framework for this study's look at the newly emerging teacher career cycle. While qualifying his work by saying that "modal trends such as these are suspect" (p. 53), Huberman draws from life-cycle research inside and outside education to propose phases through which teachers commonly pass in their careers—for the purposes of this study, I will focus on the Stabilization (4–6 yrs.) and

Experimentation/Activism (7–18 yrs.) phases. According to Huberman, teachers with 4–6 years' experience begin to feel "greater instructional master and comfort" (p. 34) as they settle in and commit to the profession. Teachers with 7–18 years' experience seek ways to increase one's instructional impact, change institutional barriers, and most notably for this study, the following:

Having been a few times around the block, teachers may be ready for new challenges, new stimulation. The implicit theme here is the newly emerging concern with growing stale in the profession, a malady one sees among older peers. (p. 34)

Huberman, writing in 1989, indicates a shift towards feelings of staleness at an earlier point, and acknowledges that his career-cycle heuristic is limited and bound by historical and sociological conditions which often trump age and experience. This study revisits these normative constructs in light of changes in social and economic forces, the relationships between political and educational institutions, and the work of teaching over the past 20 years, to help us make sense of the complexities of contemporary teachers' careers.

Drawing from recent research in business and industry as well as in education, this paper argues that, in contemporary times, there are a variety of factors that lead many teachers to "feel the stale breath of routine" (p. 43) Huberman targets as occurring around the 10–15 year mark at an even earlier point in their career. Further, as Huberman concluded that teachers with 7–18 years' experience need novelty and challenge, to engage in collaborative work with others, and classroom-level experiments focused on instruction, results from an exploratory empirical study will be shared on how taking on a teacher educator role may be one viable option to re-invigorate the careers of even relatively new teachers.

EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION ACROSS THE PROFESSIONS

Before examining current competing theories of what keeps teachers in schools as well as what drives them away, I draw from the recent "job satisfaction" literature of other professions to better understand retention and attrition of employees more broadly. I turn to the research on retention in other fields, like business, not to reify the thinking and practices of those outside of education but to de-mystify these fields and to examine what we may learn about retention across the professions—as those in business, medicine, and the military, similarly struggle to retain strong employees. I also compare these professional situations specifically to

what teachers with 4–6 years of teaching experience encounter, and how the act of mentoring new teachers may directly impact job satisfaction and indirectly impact retention.

RETENTION AND ATTRITION OF EMPLOYEES MORE GENERALLY

Attrition. The CPA Journal (2004), citing a study by Ajilon Office, lists the five top reasons people give for leaving for their jobs: (1) more money; (2) better benefits; (3) more opportunity for career growth; (4) less stress or pressure; and (5) wanting a change of pace. Of these, it can be argued that teachers are most immune to the want of more benefits. Salary is an issue for an increasing number of teachers (see Moulthrop, Calegari, & Eggers, 2005). For teachers with 4–6 years' experience, now more settled into the profession, the lack of opportunity for career growth, the highly structured and repetitive work schedule, and the stress of the job may put them at risk for leaving.

DeConinck & Stilwell (2004) describe a worker who is thinking about quitting his/her job as having "withdrawal cognitions" (p. 227). In their analysis of employee satisfaction in the business workplace, they found that these thoughts arose in relation to a worker's perception of distributive and procedural justice. Distributive justice is "an employee's beliefs of how he or she is treated in relation to others" (p. 226), including being compensated for their inputs (like spearheading a successful project) via particular outputs (like pay and promotion). Ultimately, "employees expect specific results from the organization based upon their contributions" (p. 226), and will begin to think of leaving when they perceive the input/output ratio as unequal.

Procedural justice "focuses on the process that is used to make these decisions" (p. 226). Under this organizational theory, how reward decisions are made is often more important to employees than the decisions themselves. If an employee perceives their organization as procedurally just, they are more likely to be committed to their work long-term (p. 227). Further, it is an employee's supervisor that plays a major role in the perception of procedural justice.

Public school teachers work in a highly bureaucratic multi-tiered organization. Such bureaucratic cultures are often not "conducive to the creation of employee commitment, job satisfaction, and work-group cohesion" (Lund, 2003). Pay increases and promotions in education are often based on years of experience and credit hours rather than actual teaching performance (Moulthrop, Calegari, & Eggers, 2005). Teachers with 4–6 years in schools may begin to become disillusioned, realizing that the educational system rarely if ever directly rewards them for their successes.

Further, the many layers of bureaucracy (school, district, state, union) may make it impossible for a “supervisor” (assistant principal, principal) to create a sense of procedural justice, thereby reducing a teacher’s commitment to the school.

Lund (2003) suggests that:

... managers in organizations desiring to create greater levels of job satisfaction should begin a concerted effort to build consensus and cohesion, emphasize teamwork and loyalty, while encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship. (p. 226)

With the principal investigator (PI) facilitating the opportunity for teachers with 4–6 years’ experience to mentor new teachers, the empirical study explores the potential for teamwork and innovation in the field experience arrangement to increase the job satisfaction of the mentor teacher. This process also draws from Izzo’s (2004) recommendation for ways “mid-life” employees can exceed their “perceived expiration date”: (1) Never stop being a craftsperson; (2) Never think that you’ve seen all the possibilities; and (3) Never forget the deeper purpose of your work (p. 25). Teachers with 4–6 years’ experience may be considered, on average, mid-career in this profession of accelerated attrition. It is hypothesized that mentoring a teaching intern can re-infuse a sense of purpose in these teachers’ work, and remind them of how and why they teach as they articulate pedagogical reasoning to a new teacher. They also might learn via the new teacher bringing fresh ideas into the classroom. The arrangement might then disrupt boredom—a condition Gitlin (2005) says is deeply embedded in the life and politics of schools and teachers—by promoting regenerative inquiry and imaginative innovation.

Nixon & Jaramillo (2003) explore the impact of different organizational arrangements on physician job satisfaction. They emphasize a “rising level of dissatisfaction” (p. 19) among physicians with high levels of turnover, decreased job performance, and increased patient dissatisfaction. Their survey of physicians in Florida found that individuals who were isolated (i.e., self-employed rather than working for an HMO) were more dissatisfied with their work. Physicians who had more opportunities for personal growth, including ongoing “professional interaction” (p. 23) with other physicians were more job-satisfied. This is similar to much of the literature on teacher development, which says that collaborative environments promote teacher learning and job satisfaction, and isolation promotes burn-out. This exploratory study examines whether supported collaboration between a teaching intern and a teacher with 4–6 years’

experience impacts the practicing teacher's desire to continue or alter their teaching career.

Retention. Buckingham & Coffman (1999) lay out a series of questions workers typically ask themselves in determining job satisfaction, beginning with more basic questions (What do I get? What do I give?), and then ranging to more broad questions (Do I belong here? How can we all grow?). The answers to these questions will often determine a worker's immediate satisfaction and ultimate longevity.

Branch (1998) defines the concept of retention as not "hanging on to every employee. Rather, it bespeaks a recognition that key people can't be taken for granted" (p. 2). He goes on to say that in the "middle management" field, the group most in need of extra attention and support have 3–8 years in a company; are typically younger than 40; have gained notable levels of competency; and are neither considered novices nor elites. These workers are in danger of leaving not due to lack of money, but because of boredom. In response, many companies are now providing additional opportunities for workers, like early promotions, multiple assignments, and flexible schedules, to keep individuals growing "in house." In education, well supported, recognized and compensated opportunities for teachers to take on teacher leader/teacher educator roles within the schools where they work can be seen as the equivalent of such practices.

Bates (2004) illustrates how retention is also rooted in how effectively managers deal with employee's emotions. Those most disengaged at work often feel disconnected from an immediate supervisor or perceive that the organization doesn't care about them; however, employees can just as easily be re-engaged and invigorated by being personally recognized and asked how they feel. Such care and concern is essential in engaging the "new generation" of workers who are not automatically loyal to a "paternalistic" employer. While Bates argues that such emotional engagement inevitably improves the bottom line and overall success of companies, in schools the concepts of engagement and personal validation are arguably lacking for teachers who are increasingly the recipients of mandates and criticism rather than praise and concern.

The idea that employee-employer relations are instrumental in retention is confirmed by Fitz-ens (2000), who says that the importance of good communication between workers and supervisors makes work "more a human interaction issue than a task issue" (p. 233). In his synthesis of several retention studies, he found that voluntary turnover is driven by four key factors: knowing what is expected; availability of resources to do the job; a good fit between the job and one's talents and interests;

and a feeling of being cared for as a human being (p. 235). Further, a good relationship with one's supervisor (including care, availability, and praise) will make a worker more resilient in relation to other problems at work. He concludes that "Employees quit their supervisors, not the company" (p. 236), and because of this, companies that ultimately want to focus on their customers must actually put their employees first. Yet in education, proposals and policies geared towards improved student outcomes rarely take teacher concerns into account (let alone putting them first), often provoking anxiety and resistance to change rather than resilience (see Cuban, 1993; Evans, 1996; Barnes, 2002).

Like teachers, 40% of Navy recruits leave before their 4-year tours are up (Abrashoff, 2001). Abrashoff (2001) shares strategies he used as a Navy captain to keep his sailors motivated and "on board." These retention strategies included focusing on vision and values rather than command and control, and getting to know individuals and their personal goals for growth—strategies school principals may be less inclined to use due to national, statewide, and district pressures, as well as collective bargaining agreements that restrict their ability to directly reward individual teachers.

Looking across the retention literature outside of education, there appears to be a growing consensus that successful efforts do not solely lie in things that are quantifiable (like salary raises). What appears to be more successful long-term requires additional investment by leaders/managers—forging caring relationships and forming personalized growth plans focused on individual career objectives. This is especially the case with contemporary workers who, compared to workers of even 20 years ago, are more likely to be loyal to individual people than to brand names or company missions.

TEACHER ATTRITION—VARIOUS EXPLANATIONS

I now turn more specifically to the education literature to explore the comparatively high rates of teacher attrition. Every year, 16% of teachers leave their jobs compared to 11% across occupations nationally (Moulthrop, Calegari, & Eggers, 2005, p. 167). In the following sections, I explore economic, social, and workplace theories that seek to explain this phenomenon.

Economics—supply and demand. One explanation for the comparatively high rates of teacher attrition comes from an economic standpoint. According to this view, as teachers are paid increasingly disproportionately low wages, more highly skilled workers take their talents to other professions where there are greater earning opportunities (Hoxby &

Leigh, 2004) and access to at least a middle-class lifestyle (Moulthrop, Calegari, & Eggers, 2005). The lack of financial compensation for teachers, combined with high levels of stress and low levels of autonomy, explains why “. . . some of the most qualified and brilliant go into any number of fields with better pay and more freedom” (Moulthrop, Calegari, & Eggers, 2005, p. 3).

Inclusive in framing teacher attrition as an economic issue is that teaching is still viewed by some as “woman’s work,” and thus, has historically been compensated at a lower rate. Smulyan (2004) describes teaching’s “gendered (and subsequently devalued) status...the historical assumption [is] that teaching is a natural, acceptable, and subordinated role for women” (p. 514–515). Because of these “gendered stereotypes,” teaching is socially branded as intellectually undemanding, low paying, and unworthy of a graduate from a good college.

From an economic view, both men and women who do enter the teaching profession are often quickly driven out of the classroom for financial reasons—either to higher paying jobs in educational administration, or out of education entirely to work in other fields. Thus, retaining the best teachers will depend on salary reforms, including merit pay, so that the talented can afford to stay in the profession and be compensated justly for their gifts.

Social trends. Cochran-Smith (2004) explains how contemporary teachers choose education in a very different labor market from that of the 1960s and 1970s. Notably, there are now more opportunities for women and people of color, and teaching as a profession is less respected. Simultaneously, today’s teachers expect decent pay and opportunities to advance. Cochran-Smith, referencing the work of Moore Johnson & The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers (2004), suggests that because of today’s “generational perspective” on teaching, there needs to be “a redefinition of career expectations, career paths, and school organizations” (p. 389) in an effort to retain new quality teachers.

Synthesizing recent literature on contemporary teacher retention, Cochran-Smith concludes:

To stay in teaching, today’s—and tomorrow’s—teachers need school conditions where they are successful and supported, opportunities to work with other educators in professional learning communities rather than isolation, differentiated leadership and advancement prospects during the course of the career, and good pay for what they do. (p. 391)

While there is some evidence that teacher retention is more of an issue in some areas of the country than others (see CSTP report, 2005), there is a growing body of research that shows that efforts to sustain and maintain teachers are insufficient, leading to shortages of teachers and hindering school reform efforts. For example, Gitlin (2005) situates teacher dissatisfaction within the larger context of American schooling, whose “everyday politics” has historically promoted boredom and a dulling of the imagination for students and teachers alike.

Studies from other fields confirm that retaining quality employees is not just a problem in education, and may be a product of the larger “super-automated, mad-rush society” (Izzo, 2004, p. 26). Due to social and cultural influences, “the womb-to-tomb mentality of staying with one employer appears to have disintegrated” (Lund, 2003, p. 225) and the “flat career trajectory” that Cochran-Smith (2004, p. 391) speaks of in education may not only no longer be viable not only for teachers, but across the professions. Armour (2005) explains how the new generation of workers (often referred to as “Generation Y”) wants flexible work schedules, recognition, constant feedback, and varied tasks focused on solutions. Many of these characteristics are absent in the work of teachers, whose role has remained largely unchanged since its inception over 100 years ago (Lagemann, 1993) – with regimented schedules and work tasks, and few opportunities to collaborate, dialogue, and receive praise.

Professional development and working conditions. Countering the prevailing view of the time, Ingersoll’s (2001) organizational analysis shows how teacher shortages are not due to the lack of supply of new teachers, but rather, an inability of many schools to retain practicing teachers. Further, this “revolving door” is far more associated with teacher job dissatisfaction than retirement, forced lay-offs, or family-related leave. The author suggests that rather than working to increase the teacher supply, we should be working to improve organizational conditions for teachers through such means as increased administrative support and opportunities to make decisions.

Ingersoll’s conclusions are confirmed by two recent studies by The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (2005a, 2005b) which found that schools in North Carolina and South Carolina “often struggle to address critical working conditions” for teachers (2005a, p. vii). Most notably, the studies draw direct correlations between professional development for teachers and student achievement. For example, in North Carolina, “For every one point increase [in the area of professional development] on the survey, schools are four times more likely to achieve AYP” (2005a, p. 7). Because supportive leadership and professional growth were so

important to teachers in these studies, the report concludes by recommending that teachers have opportunities “not only to advance in teaching, but also to explore and pursue the principal-ship” (2005a, p. 24).

SUMMARY: RETAINING WORKERS IN A WIDESPREAD CHALLENGE

The review of the literature shows that education is not alone in struggling to retain the best. Those in business, medicine, and the military face similar challenges. Social conditions like lack of loyalty to employers and a culture of speed and movement exacerbate the transitory workplace.

At the same time, the educational environment creates additional challenges. The school day and year are highly regimented, as are ways to professionally advance. Decisions and rewards are often made based on bureaucratic rules for all rather than the individual skills. Further, the choice to be (or remain) a teacher competes with far more flexible careers, including those that involve working from home, and these non-educational paths are often more lucrative and autonomous. These factors combine to make it a significant challenge to retain motivated and talented teachers, and increasingly, those most apt look elsewhere for opportunities to grow.

THIS STUDY: RETHINKING OLD ALLIANCES

Not only are teachers with 4–6 years of teaching experience currently at risk, but so are the schools of education that had previously certified them. There is a growing call for universities to go beyond their usual charges of educating future teachers and conducting research on practicing teachers. Higher education institutions focused on K-12 education are being asked to prove their relevance and their worth (see Cochran-Smith, 2005; Labaree, 2005).

A specific challenge for schools of education is to become more active in the growth of not only preservice teachers but inservice teachers as well. Goodlad & McMannon (2004) note: “Not only are schools and universities equal partners in both the preservice education and continuing practice of teachers, but they are equally responsible for their own institutional renewal and for assisting each other in this endeavor” (p. 70). Zimpher & Howey (2005) conclude that mutually beneficial partnerships are all the more important in light of the pressures of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and that university faculty need to focus more on the success and growth of practicing teachers.

Student Teaching

One traditional partnership between the universities (housed with those who will teach) and the K-12 schools (housed with those who are teaching) is the student teaching arrangement. Often, an intern in the final phase of such a certification program spends up to a year in a practicing teacher's classroom—observing, connecting coursework to the field, and ultimately teaching. The host teacher is often highly experienced, and some may have a student teacher almost every year. However, there is rarely systematic professional development provided for the host teacher, even though the teacher educator role provides markedly different challenges from their teacher role (Bullough, 2005; Zeichner, 2005).

This Study's Rationale and Goals

With the teaching careers of those with 4–6 years of experience increasingly at risk, and the need for increased learning opportunities for mentors of university interns, this exploratory study seeks to rethink and examine the traditional way that host teachers are chosen and supported. Working with a local school district in the Pacific Northwest, seven teachers with 4–6 years of teaching experience were identified to host a university intern. This was a departure from traditional district practice where, prior to this project, teachers with student teachers had an average of 12 years' experience.

While student teachers are usually reserved for those with a number of years' experience, many newer teachers are ready for such professional development opportunities. Berman (2004) writes, "Talented teachers will not last long in a culture that undermines or is neutral to their needs and interests, leaves them isolated, or fails to promote their growth" (p. 118). He emphasizes that around 4–6 years of teaching is:

. . . a critical period in which [teachers] decide whether or not to continue in the field of education . . . the effort made during these formative years will set in place basic attitudes about the profession and one's capabilities that are critical for a teacher's long term commitment to teaching. (p. 133, 138)

Berman adds that earlier and more challenging professional development opportunities can provide necessary leadership roles, spark professional dialogue with colleagues and university faculty around approaches to practice, and increase commitment to their school and the profession.

This study, then, serves multiple purposes. For the research community, it explores how teachers with 4–6 years of experience conceive of their career path in education, as well as ways that universities and schools can better partner to increase teacher job satisfaction. Pragmatically, for the new host teachers, it seeks to provide professional development and opportunities for growth, and explore any potential benefits to these teachers, their schools, and the interns they work with.

Supports Provided and Data Collected

Throughout the 2004–2005 school year, led by the PI, the seven teachers participated in a variety of activities designed to support (and simultaneously study) their development as teachers and teacher educators. Before the school year began, there were two interactive 90-minute workshops on various aspects of the host teacher role (see Appendix A for workshop themes). During the year, there were an additional three 90-minute seminars to discuss the challenges and successes of being a teacher educator, and how the experience was impacting their thinking about their career. Field notes were taken both during and after the five sessions. Additionally, the PI created a website discussion board so that the teachers could share ideas, experiences, concerns, and questions in between the group meetings. Teachers were encouraged but not required to post messages in between our in-person seminars. Over the course of the year, 52 messages were posted—14 by the PI, 38 by participating teachers—all of which were collected and analyzed.

Teachers also participated in two 45-minute individual interviews—once at the beginning, and once at the end of the school year. Interview protocol #1 sought to elicit information on professional background; perspectives on teaching; conceptions of their upcoming teacher educator role; and overall career goals. Interview protocol #2 explored similar themes in order to examine change over time (see Appendix B for Interview Protocol). The protocol served as an interview guide (see Patton, 1990) with specifically worded open-ended questions. While this ensured that the same types of information would be collected from each participant, it also allowed for participant-directed adjustments during the interview process if the questions were not prompting teacher interest or participants wanted to add insights outside the protocol. For example, in discussing longer-term career plans (Q#3), several participants spoke about how money was or was not important to them in comparison to other factors, like the opportunity to lead. This prompted follow up questions about the relative importance of economics that was outside

the initial protocol but within the bounds of the pre-determined subject (longer-term career plans), thus maintaining the integrity of the interview.

All seven teachers participated in the first interview; all but one teacher who developed health problems late in the year participated in the second interview. The thirteen interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

Finally, the PI (also the university Director of Field Experiences) made himself available for individual consulting on an as-needed basis. Some of these correspondences were conducted by e-mail (saved as artifacts). Other interactions occurred over the phone or in person. Field notes were taken immediately following these conversations.

Data Analysis

Once data collection was complete, I began analysis by generating a list of initial descriptive codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) reflective of the study's theoretical framework. Early passes through the data included a focus on teacher articulations as to whether economic, social, or professional development conditions were impacting their career goals. Examples of codes that directly came out of this framework are: Teacher Education—Educational Administration; Economic Considerations; and Challenge vs. Restlessness. Preliminary analysis also focused on ways that hosting an intern did or did not impact participants' longer-term thinking about careers in education.

During later phases of data analysis, the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was employed to refine and develop new codes outside the initial list, and link codes into categories and themes. First, data sources were read and coded individually, and then read again to develop cross-data codes. Then, analytic memos (Strauss, 1987) fostered the development of categories related to teachers' perceived professional need for greater stimulation in the classroom and beyond. By looking across the categories, I was able to develop the predominant themes represented in the Findings section. A sample of the evolving analysis scheme is included in Appendix C. An initial draft of this paper was e-mailed to all participants, seeking feedback as to whether their experiences and perspectives were captured accurately. All teachers who responded validated the interpretations present in this paper.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

In this section, I provide participant information and related data collection in Table 1 below. It is important to note that the way in which participants were selected may not make these the “typical” educators with 4–6 years of experience. District mentors who had previously worked with these teachers provided initial recommendations, making it more likely that study participants had made positive impressions during the early part of their careers. This selection process also increased the likelihood that participants are the highly motivated and capable teachers intended for study. After initial recommendation by district mentors, the PI spoke with each prospective participant in more detail about the project and study, and ultimately all seven of the teachers recommended by the district signed up.

Table 1: Participants and Data Collection

Participant	Position	Yrs. Experience	Interviews	Web Postings	Seminars Attended
Robert	High School Social Studies	5	2	0	5
Louis	High School	5	2	6	4
Becky	Science Elementary	4	2	3	5
Suzanne	1st/2nd Grade Elementary	4	2	6	3
Christine	2nd Grade	6	1	0	2
Kayla	High School Science	6	2	23	5
Stu	Elementary 4th Grade	4	2	0	4
	Middle School Science				

FINDINGS

The following section explores the findings related to the questions: How do teachers with 4–6 years of teaching conceive of their career path? Does taking on a teacher educator role via hosting an intern impact their long-term career plans? Data from interviews are abbreviated “int”; field notes are abbreviated “fn”; and website discussion board comments as “db”.

Findings are organized around several recurring themes. The data indicates that teachers with 4–6 years of experience are searching for

roles/activities that are: *regenerative* (keeping them learning and excited about their teaching); and also *generative* (widening their sphere of influence, sharing their gifts to others in the profession). Professional challenges related to social and working conditions point to the urgent need for such activities. Further, the mentor teacher role may be uniquely suited to provide both regenerative and generative opportunities synergistically, while at the same time exacerbating awareness of discontent.

An additional finding—and one that is consistent with economic theories on teacher retention—is that gender was an important factor in teachers planning out their next career move within the profession. For most of the male teachers looking towards the future, career satisfaction was to be achieved via a path from teaching to administration, with economics and social structures playing major parts in this decision. For most of the female teachers, a course from teacher to teacher educator was the plan that seemed to hold the most hope for renewal.

The Career Path: Thinking of Advancement

This section explores the ways in which participants conceived of their current positions and future career plans. It also examines how the mentor role fit into overall visions of professional self.

From mentor to administrator. Two of the three male teachers had clear plans to become administrators. For example, at a group seminar, Stu predicted that he will be an Assistant Principal in two years. Taking on the role of mentor teacher, he said, “set the stage for analyzing teaching and cognitively coaching green teachers . . . This is a good stepping stone” (fn, November 22, 2004). During this year, Stu had begun a Principals Program at a local university, and viewed mentoring as a good way for him to practice “the toughest part: how to critique people in my own profession” (int, August 13, 2004). One specific opportunity Stu had during the year for “critique” was when he confronted his female intern about inappropriate dress. He said that having a student teacher was essential for future principals, and that the role of mentor teacher is “like a mini-administrator” (int, June 6, 2005).

While Stu had clear plans for a future in educational administration, he meanwhile wanted to “become the best teacher I could be in order to teach other teachers how to teach well” (int, June 6, 2005). Louis was similarly motivated by opportunities to increase his leadership positions within schools. Stating that “developing teachers is a practice, not a policy,” he had specific plans for ways he would support new teachers within school buildings as a principal. Taking on student teachers was a natural step in his path, as Louis commented it would be “ridiculous” for some-

one to become an administrator without ever mentoring a new teacher (int, May 2, 2005).

While Stu and Louis had plans to ultimately leave teaching for administration, Suzanne and Becky provided clear and gendered contrasts. Suzanne said she would "never want to be an administrator" because she has difficulty taking on an authoritative role, and would prefer to be someone people could confide in (int, August 9, 2005). Becky also rejected the administrative path in favor of "being with kids" and perhaps "helping other teachers" (int, August 5, 2005).

Robert, who had come into teaching in his mid-40s after several non-education administrative positions, was the only male teacher not considering educational administration. Kayla was the only female teacher who mentioned it as a possibility, but ultimately said she was more interested in future instructional support roles. The administrative path seemed more of a viable option for the male teachers, with potential reasons explored in the next section.

Economic considerations. Stu's reasoning for wanting to so quickly become a principal was directly related to his perception of economic reality. Wanting to "keep my wife happy and my kids happy," Stu felt that "on a teacher's salary we'd be scraping by for the next 30 years and I don't want to do that" (int, August 13, 2004). While as a teacher he did "extra work," like coaching, teaching Saturday School, and running intramurals, he said becoming an administrator was a way to "concentrate my efforts on one job . . . and provide for my family really well" (int, June 6, 2005).

Louis's rationale for going into educational administration was also impacted by long-term family planning. Both Louis and Stu felt the need to take leadership roles in both their schools and family units, combining professional and financial considerations. In contrast, Becky said, "I don't think that you can put money, a price on teaching. Yeah, I know that everyone says that we should get paid more but I think it's just a wonderful job" (int, August 5, 2004). Newly married herself, Becky's professional decisions were not impacted by financial considerations.

The contrast between the male and female participants may be due to the gendered societal expectations that men are motivated by power and money, and women are motivated by compassion and empathy. Smulyan (2004) explains how "norms socialize men and women to expect that women will be in the helping professions . . . [with] a sense of self as helper rather than leader, as warm rather than ambitious, and as passive and deferential rather than active and independent . . . maintaining their connection to teaching and instruction rather than management" (p. 516–517). Thus, while the male teachers were comfortable with the

thought of leading other teachers via the principalship and reaping the accompanying financial rewards, teachers like Suzanne were concerned that such power would reduce their capacity to serve as supportive confidants, and Becky said she was not at all motivated by money.

The generativity of teacher education. While gender seemed to play an important role in career planning, as pertains to the mentoring role itself, there was cross-participant satisfaction in the *generative* opportunities it provided. Teachers consistently used language that indicated there was deep satisfaction in the practice of helping a new teacher grow, as evidenced in the following five responses:

Suzanne: I liked being in [the classroom], and I love the kids, but I also like seeing someone grow and learn from what you do. (int, May 25, 2005)

Kayla: . . . you're also teaching this other person how you do what you do and how they can find their own identity. And I enjoyed doing that . . . I see a teacher educator as someone who's trying to lead her peers or colleagues in the craft of teaching . . . [It gives me] more confidence in myself as a teacher leader, and my ability to help share teaching with other teachers. (int, May 25, 2005)

Stu: . . . it's being able to show someone the ropes. Here's how to do it my way and here's all these other ways. Seeing them grow. It's like having your own little kid for six months. (int, June 6, 2005)

Becky: [By mentoring] you can actually impact more kids . . . I walk away knowing that I have helped somebody start in the profession that I just love . . . helping other teachers grow, not just your students, is like helping all their students too. It's like a tree and little branches. (int, June 1, 2005)

Louis: I think my role right now is changing . . . I think I'm at the point now where I can start helping other people and can create better experiences for not only my students, but the program I'm coordinating as a whole. Instead of just influencing the 150, 180 students in my courses, now I can start influencing a greater number of students, and that applies to student teachers as well. (int, August 3, 2004)

Using phrases like “seeing someone grow,” “find their own identity,” “like having a kid,” “like a tree and little branches,” and “influencing a greater number of students,” these teachers with 4–6 years of experience indicated a readiness for and satisfaction in widening their professional sphere of influence. While the mentoring role provided markedly different challenges and rewards than their K-12 teaching role, most teachers said it complemented and strengthened their passion for teaching while facilitating an opportunity to “change roles.” Further, helping to produce new teachers augmented, rather than supplanted, their teaching satisfaction. This was typified at the end of the year when several of the teachers said they were measuring their success not only by how their K-12 students performed, but also by whether their student teachers were ultimately hired.

Robert was one notable outlier. He was the only participant somewhat negatively impacted by the teacher educator role, citing that it held him back from having enjoyable interactions with students. Coming into teaching later in life, Robert was perhaps less motivated by generative activities. He said he enjoyed teaching too much to turn his classroom over to a new teacher, and would probably not mentor again.

Social trends. Several of the teachers indicated a professional restlessness that is consistent with recent literature on the new worker mentality within and outside of education. Suzanne, representing the new attitude towards the workplace associated with Generation Y (see Armour, 2005), said she is unlikely to remain in teaching for a long time because she is always looking for more to do (int, August 9, 2004). Becky's recent switch to a different school to teach in a 1st–2nd Grade Challenge Program was a self-proclaimed “professional move” which was an “intriguing challenge” after three years at the same school and grade level left her feeling she had no room left to grow (int, August 5, 2004).

These teachers also represented Generation Y's strong work ethic. In Kayla's relatively short career, she had seized numerous professional development opportunities, including being trained to be a Teacher Coach (int, August 6, 2004). Stu's attitude was typical of the group: “Yes, I am young and inexperienced, but I am going to do the best job that I can. Because what's the point? If you're just going to do half a job, there's no point in trying to do it” (int, June 6, 2005).

With some concern about a negative attitude towards teachers within society, each of the participant-teachers expressed a hunger for challenge and recognition, and indicated that being given these would increase their time in teaching and in the field of education.

Working conditions. At different points throughout the year, the majority of participants spoke to how the stresses of their work negatively

impacted their job satisfaction, as well as how professional development opportunities were sometimes not structured to meet their needs. For example, Becky said that in addition to working with students, “a lot of other stuff is expected of you,” and that often these things take energy away from more important things like “planning and teaching” (int, August 5, 2004).

Interestingly, several of the teachers said that while mentoring a new teacher made them more passionate about teaching, it also made them think more about, as Kayla put it, “the ugly side of teaching” (int, May 25, 2005). During a group seminar, both Becky and Kayla said that mentoring a new teacher into the profession has led them to broader concerns about lack of public respect for the difficulty of the work (fn, November 22, 2004). Kayla also questioned to what extent she should share the frustrations of teaching with her intern, writing on the website “I never realized how much we do” (db, December 4, 2004) and sharing a specific incident:

I had an interesting dilemma this week. When my intern was here on Tuesday, I felt torn. I was honestly feeling overwhelmed with all these new expectations after the Monday “Student Achievement Day,” and I was feeling annoyed with some of my students’ behaviors. However, I wasn’t sure how much of this to show/to share with my intern. On the one hand, it is the reality of the career she is preparing for, so I should be honest. On the other hand, I expect she would like her mentor teacher to be modeling great coping strategies. Has anyone else felt the need to “put on a brave face” to be inspiring about the profession, even on days when that isn’t reality for us? (db, October 1, 2004)

Later in the year, Kayla said that she did decide to be honest with her intern when she felt “disgruntled about the profession” because she was able to articulate how her passion for teaching students was separate from her anger at outside influences she felt “needed to be fixed in our current system of education” (int, May 25, 2005). Aspects of this ugly side of teaching included uncompensated time expectations, the volume of data collection required, constant assessments, and frustrating high-stakes tests. Robert said that with teaching becoming more of a “contact sport,” being a new teacher mentor has led him to ask himself, “How can anyone take 20 years of this?” (fn, November 22, 2004). Drawing from his military background, he likened being a new teacher to being a World War I fighter pilot where inexperienced pilots got the worst airplanes and the most difficult assignments (int, August 3, 2004).

While Kayla grappled with how honest she should be with her intern when feeling overwhelmed, Suzanne said it was important for her student teacher to see her “stressed out” and “overwhelmed” by the workload because “everyone is that way in the teaching field” (int, May 25, 2005). Kayla also eventually came to believe that it is best to be realistic about the often-frustrating working conditions, and to advise new teachers to join the profession “Only if you love it enough to deal with all the ugly stuff” (int, May 25, 2005).

Such concerns for the treatment of teachers, the negative working conditions they sometimes endure, and a pervasive lack of respect for what they do, permeated participants’ interactions with interns. In mentoring a new teacher into the profession, these teachers with 4–6 years of experience became more explicitly aware of what they themselves face in their quest to, as Robert put it, “live long enough” in the profession. The dilemmas of teachers with 4–6 years of experience are explored in more depth in the next section.

On the Cusp—Teaching with 4–6 years of Experience

This section explores both what created resilience and discontent in participants, focusing specifically on issues closely connected to this emerging crucial time period in teachers’ careers.

The critical years: Ruts and resilience. In our second group seminar, during a discussion about the “master-apprentice” relationship, Robert asserted that teachers with 4–6 years of experience are neither. Drawing from a comparison to how architects and blacksmiths learn their trade, he said that as teachers they were in between master and apprentice: “Journeyman . . . that’s what we are” (fn, September 2, 2004). Louis then deconstructed the concept of “master teacher” further, saying that the assumption that mastery is based on years of experience is not necessarily true. A veteran teacher, he said, is not necessarily a master teacher.

Embedded in this conversation was a sense that teachers in these critical years are often under-appreciated. In response to this perception, each of the participants spoke to how they were at a crossroads where the right support (or, conversely, the wrong experiences) would likely determine their professional future.

Christine and Becky both associated the importance of the 4–6 year period—and the reason why many of their friends were leaving—with recertification and licensure renewal requirements. The increasingly cumbersome requirements for teachers with 4–6 years of experience, Christine felt, led many to ask themselves “Am I going in the direction I want to go?” (int, August 5, 2004). Becky said she was one of the few

teachers she knew who liked teaching enough to “go through those hoops” (int, August 5, 2004), although she later shared, “I have to tell you there are times when I think, ‘I don’t know if I can do this’” (int, June 1, 2005).

Several teachers also indicated that at around the fourth year it is easy to begin to, as Suzanne put it, “get into a rut” (int, August 9, 2004). Speaking to what she felt was becoming a sad pandemic, Becky said that many of her teaching peers were leaving the profession “one by one” due to “burn-out” (int, August 5, 2004). While Huberman (1989) said that such maladies were most common in teachers with at least 10 years of experience, this study indicates that contemporary teachers may face this phenomenon at an even earlier point, due to increased requirements, lack of compensation and recognition, and stress.

However, for teachers in this study, taking on a mentor role seemed to facilitate a way to avoid some of the negative consequences of these pitfalls. For example, having felt he just “blossomed as a teacher” last year, Stu felt that now in his fourth year he was ready to share his learnings with a new teacher. Opportunities facilitated by the field experience arrangement—to share and reduce some of the isolation long associated with the teaching profession (Lortie, 1975)—would prove to be crucial for participants in this study, as explored in the next section.

Impact of mentoring: Regeneration in collaboration. Facing critical career decisions and mounting social, economic, and workplace pressures, participants found satisfaction in the mentoring relationship that renewed professional passions.

On one level, many of the teachers simply enjoyed the company of another adult—especially those, like Becky, who had no other teachers in the building with the same teaching assignment and wanted to share their passion for teaching with a colleague. Kayla commented, “I was struck today by how nice it is to have another grown up in the classroom. I am really liking ‘sharing’ the 85,000 tasks I have to do each day with another person” (db, October 11, 2004).

Practically, having another teacher to work with sometimes made things easier. Kayla expressed, “It was nice to have another person available [the first two days of school] to help with all the logistical issues that come up” (db, September 12, 2004). Christine also enjoyed the pragmatic benefits, saying that she is more organized with two people in the classroom (fn, November 22, 2004).

While company and assistance were important to the participants, an even more powerful impact of having a student teacher was on their own continued learning. For example, Christine viewed the opportunity of having an intern as a way to avoid becoming professionally stale:

I think it's important for me to gain the experience of working with others in a different capacity. Because people are coming in and as I get older, younger teachers are coming in and I feel I can gain something from whatever they're learning . . . And things change . . . and those are the people in my future whom I'll be working with and I would like to get to know them. . . I think if you help others, then they naturally help you. Our education system needs to do that. We need to stay in contact with one another. Keep teachers connected to one another. (int, August 5, 2004)

It is interesting how Christine's statement on how she thought the opportunity to mentor would impact her personally ultimately turned into a larger statement on the profession. The idea that collaborating with an intern was fighting off a more pervasive malady in teaching was echoed by others as well. Suzanne said she looked forward to the opportunity to learn from both her intern and the other mentors in our group, as in the teaching profession "it's good to bounce ideas off each other" (int, August 9, 2004). Kayla explained how she not only learned more, but was reinvigorated:

It was worth the time because it was very energizing and it's exciting to share your passion, what you love doing, with another person. And to watch them experience the joys for the first time and help them through the first lows. (int, May 25, 2005)

Teachers were overwhelmingly re-energized by two collaborations facilitated by this study. The first was their relationship with their intern, which emphasized sharing what they loved (and struggled with) about teaching while remaining on the job. While divvying the workload was sometimes helpful, the greatest satisfaction was found in sharing an important piece of their emerging professional selves—an endeavor they believed would at the same time enrich their own work and future teaching.

A second collaboration that would prove important was the group of participants themselves. The support the group provided was a stark contrast to what many had experienced within their careers, and created a sense of professional justice that had been lacking, as explored in the next section.

Backlash & Justice

As explained earlier in this paper, according to DeConick & Stilwell (2004) an individual's sense of workplace "justice" (distribution of compensation and how these decisions get made) will impact job satisfaction and longevity. In this study, participants spoke to systemic injustices they faced as teachers with 4–6 years of experience, as well as how the group support facilitated by this study mediated these difficulties.

Distributive and procedural injustice. One way teachers felt they faced procedural injustice was in meeting certification requirements. New laws in the state of this study site made it more difficult for teachers to maintain their license, despite what they had achieved in terms of teaching degrees or positive evaluations. Christine said that this was leading many of her colleagues to ask, "Am I getting out of this career what I want in order to put that effort in to renew [my certification]?" (int, August 5, 2004). Robert also said the "professional certification hoops" he had to jump through were part of a larger "institutionalized" injustice where "[the reward structure] works on a seniority system and that's just the way it is" (int, August 3, 2004). Such bureaucratic rules, he felt, left a "gulf between management and the workers . . . [between] administration and teachers." Teachers in this study consistently expressed that (re)certification requirements were unjust, demoralizing, and a poor way to make decisions as to who should remain a teacher.

While this negative reaction to institutionalization may not be surprising, the ways in which teachers said they perceived more local and procedural injustice was an unexpected finding in this study. The teachers indicated that throughout the year, in multiple ways, they faced a backlash against the decision to permit them to have student teachers and take on a mentoring role so early in their career.

The first indication of this was at a group seminar, after several teachers had returned from a statewide "mentor training" supported by the district. Becky and Louis indicated that something "bad" had happened to them. They later shared that several times they were either directly or indirectly told that they "didn't belong there" as newer teachers (group seminar, September 2, 2004).

Other teachers faced backlash from their colleagues at school. Becky says she has faced several sarcastic comments, with veteran staff saying cuttingly, "You're very brave for taking on this position this early in your career"; "The principal will let you know when he's observing, unlike the rest of us"; and "Why are you getting an intern—I have more experience—What in the world are you doing with a student teacher?" (group seminar, January 25, 2005). Even the university supervisor, Becky said,

repeatedly spoke to her in “belittling” ways (group seminar, April 15, 2005). While Becky said this was demoralizing, she added that it made her “more determined” to do a good job.

In contrast to sometimes unsupportive colleagues and an increasingly daunting bureaucracy of hoops and requirements (based on years of experience rather than degrees or local teaching impact), participants found some solace in the group chosen for this study. Every participant said that the most helpful support throughout the year was the in-person group meetings. Teachers said that within the group they received non-judgmental feedback focused on their work; an opportunity to hear similar struggles and to “know you are not alone”; and a place to gain new perspectives face-to-face. There was also a professional-generational affinity—as Suzanne put it:

. . . I think it was nice to see we were all in the same boat. We all have similar issues and then we could help each other brainstorm. And I think by us all being on the same page as far as years of experience, we could all kind of relate to one another. I don't know if that makes sense. That's just how I felt . . . I just felt like it was easier to talk to everybody. There was no, ‘Well, I've taught for this amount of years.’ No one felt intimidated because we were all in the same boat. It was nice. (int, August 5, 2004)

DISCUSSION

Looking across the retention/attrition literature within and outside education, as well as the findings from this exploratory study of teachers with 4–6 years of experience, there is evidence that a new career cycle is indeed emerging in the teaching profession. While this is consistent with changes in the larger workforce, some of the dilemmas inherent in these shifts are specific to the field of education. The ways in which contemporary teachers perceive their careers as well as economic, social, and workplace conditions, have important implications for those who want to retain the best of the new generation of teachers. This study points to the need for further research and policy development that directly deals with the issue of teacher job satisfaction and retention.

While the empirical part of this research was limited in its scope ($n=7$ teachers) and time (1 year), the findings are consistent with recent literature on the additional challenges of retaining the new generation of workers. Each of these teachers with 4–6 years of experience hungered for challenge, ways to remain fresh, and recognition when deserved. Being in a district that was largely supportive of teacher development,

each participant took advantage of projects and paths they were offered for advancement. After only a few years in the profession, all but Robert were actively seeking beyond-classroom skills that might ultimately lead to new types of educational positions to maximize their skills.

It is important to note that many school districts do not provide the wide array of supports and opportunities to their teachers that were so necessary in sustaining the teachers in this study. Even with these supports, however—for largely economic and career considerations—several were planning paths that would soon lead them outside the classroom. Consistent with accounts of the role economics plays in teachers' careers (Moulthrop, Calegari, & Eggers, 2005), male teachers who perceived themselves as family breadwinners were well on their way to educational administration.

While gender appeared to be a factor in considering the principalship, there was restlessness across all participants and continuous reflection on the "input-output" ratio of their work (DeConick & Stilwell, 2004). Particularly in relation to certification requirements, teacher-participants felt that what they were putting into the profession was disproportionate to the benefits they were receiving. This perceived lack of procedural and distributive justice stirred a restlessness consistent with Generation Y's disposition towards the workplace. Several teachers were also frustrated with the way they were treated by veteran teachers, whom they perceived as dismissive of their leadership capacity simply based on years of experience.

Yet teacher-participants showed not only capacity, but aptitude, to lead. They took their mentoring role as seriously as their teaching, and in this generative position, were energized by the opportunity to help a new teacher enter the profession and build their own teacher-selves. In sharing time, ideas, and space, participants said their own teaching was also renewed. Both those who planned to become principals and teacher educators saw direct correlations between the mentoring experience and their next steps on the career ladder.

Thus, being given the opportunity to mentor a new teacher provided an opportunity to both renew passions for teaching and give to the larger profession in a novel way. However, articulating their pedagogical reasonings reminded these teachers with 4–6 years of experience not only how much they knew and had achieved thus far—but also how much frustration they had endured. Many came to realize that being a teacher educator was not only about helping their intern with classroom management and planning, but also helping new teachers understand and manage the multiple demands contemporary teachers face.

While the seven teachers in this study had successfully navigated the

“ugly side” of teaching thus far, the majority indicated that remaining in the classroom working with kids would be challenging, and in some cases, unlikely. Robert, the one participant clearly outside of Generation Y, was a consistent outlier. His neither having plans to leave the classroom nor mentor a new teacher again raises additional questions as to whether the 4–6 year period is critical in the same way for mid-life newer teachers as it is for younger newer teachers.

CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

This study confirms that the odd mix of staleness and stress that often befalls teachers, now occurring earlier in teacher careers, requires counterbalancing opportunities for growth, renewal, and challenge in order to retain quality teachers. Whereas many professions struggle to retain the best of the contemporary workforce, teaching is particularly susceptible to the negative impact of isolation, regimented schedules, and regulated advancement. While some teachers, like several in this study, seek out administrative positions to move forward professionally and financially, an underlying nagging question remains: How do we keep good teachers teaching?

To answer this question, we might consider what is being done in business to promote job satisfaction and retention. What would early promotions and flexible schedules (see Branch, 1998) or personal recognition and managerial emotional engagement (see Bates, 2004) look like in education? How might we redefine career paths and expectations (Cochran-Smith, 2004) so that motivated and talented teachers do not fall victim to burn-out and boredom?

I conclude with three potential areas of exploration for both educational practice and research—merit pay, differentiated jobs, and university-school partnerships. These three categories were derived from the literature on retention/attrition inside and outside of teaching, as well as the results from this exploratory study of seven teachers with 4–6 years of experience.

Merit Pay

The perspectives of Louis and Stu—talented teachers making plans to leave the classroom for greater financial opportunity—calls for a deeper examination of teacher pay systems. Currently, in many states, achieving National Board certification is the only way for teachers to be monetarily compensated for instructional excellence and creativity. Structuring compensation that rewards teachers for problem-solving and collabora-

tion with colleagues (see Lagemann, 1993) as well as in-classroom success and innovation has the potential to shift the focus of motivated teachers back to their work with kids and away from jobs outside the classroom or education entirely.

It is important to note, however, that merit pay and pay-for-performance (both individual and school-wide) is a complex topic, and has multiple manifestations in policy and practice. Many teacher unions are still opposed to this reform. However, others are seizing the issue of merit pay as a way to shift the debate from political-policy questions like “Should there be merit pay for teachers?” to more purposeful pedagogical questions like, “What in teaching is meritorious?”

While some allege that merit pay lays the business model on education in reactionary ways, actual workplace conditions indicate the line between the two fields is much less clear. In fact, many businesses, such as those in the technology field, have progressive worker-centered environments, while the work of teaching is in many ways still organized like the factories Henry Ford originated in the 1920s—with regimented schedules and top-down decision-making.

Actual experiments with merit and pay-for-performance systems will likely become one of the major topics for research concerned with teacher professional development over the next 10 years. Currently, a number of major cities, like Houston (see Blumenthal, 2006) and Denver (see Moulthrop, Calegari, & Eggers, 2005), are experimenting with merit pay models. Questions that researchers will need to address include: Which aspects of these models improve teacher performance? Student performance? Which combination of incentives improves teacher job satisfaction and longevity? Which are compatible with the lived experience of teaching and which are deleterious to individual teacher and whole staff morale?

Differentiated Jobs

While merit pay might address financial compensation for teacher success, it does not ameliorate basic and antiquated organizational conditions in schools. Teachers like Kayla who have the will and talent to improve instructional practices beyond their classroom have few structures and sanctioned opportunities to do so. Developing and researching innovative ways to restructure the job of teaching will be increasingly paramount, exploring questions like: How can we structure the work of teaching so that teachers can have a wider impact while staying rooted in their classrooms?

This preliminary study indicates that, over time, teachers seek out

opportunities to create change and impact instructional practice on multiple levels: beginning with their classroom, moving towards their school, and then the larger profession. Developing hybrid positions where one is half-time teacher and half-time mentor to new teachers, curriculum consultant, or community liaison, is one possible path to creating such opportunities.

While some question whether budgets will allow for such organizational arrangements, some of which will likely require the hiring of additional teachers, Ingersoll (2001) has shown how improving professional conditions for teachers is more cost-effective in the long run, and other studies (SCTQ Report, 2005a, 2005b) indicate that doing so improves student achievement in more lasting ways than the repeated importing of costly interventions.

University-School Partnerships

More than a decade ago, Lagemann (1993) called for universities to “recognize and claim the reinvention of the teacher’s role as one of their priorities” (p. 7) by sharing the jobs of research, invention, and dissemination of knowledge about teaching. Yet many schools of education and their respective surrounding K-12 schools still operate in separate spheres, sometimes collaborative, and sometimes adversarial. This study’s collaboration between university, school district, and school-based educators hints at the promise that cross-institutional endeavors holds for meaningful conversations about teaching and the opportunities such partnerships can foster for individuals.

While it may be difficult to make radical changes in institutional norms such that the line between those who educate children, teach teachers, and conduct educational research are erased, we may at the very least seek to disrupt this hierarchy. This study indicates that it was not just the opportunity to mentor a new teacher that was generative and re-energizing, but that deeper satisfaction came in the structured and intentional ways participants learned about and reflected on their growth as teacher educators. Inasmuch as universities can facilitate such leadership and learning opportunities as part of their ongoing practice and research, they may promote not only teacher job satisfaction and retention, but mutual institutional renewal (Goodlad & McMannon, 2004), and the fortitude to fight external political pressures (Zimpher & Howey, 2005), as well as the often-mutual enemies of their existence (Cochran-Smith 2005; Labaree, 2005).

Final Words

Teaching will need to become an exciting opportunity to attract—and stay an exciting job in order to keep—the current and new generation of workers who have high expectations of self and employers, and seek ongoing learning and high levels of responsibility (Armour, 2005). This will require deeper exploration of policy reforms like merit and pay-for-performance, organizational restructuring of the teaching job, and institutional change at the union and university levels. Along with these fundamental shifts, smaller and specific changes, such as earlier and more challenging professional development opportunities like mentoring a new teacher, may serve as important hooks as the new teacher career cycle emerges. However, more critical than any single change in policy or practice will be ensuring that teachers' work is just, meaningful, and compensated, with opportunities to generate new paths that serve the profession, children, and personal goals.

APPENDIX A—WORKSHOP THEMES FOR TEACHERS AS TEACHER EDUCATORS

WORKSHOP #1

Theme: Expectations, Power, and Control

Date: August 26, 2004

Specific Topics:

- Expectations of the mentor teacher in the student teaching experience
- Expectations of the intern in the student teaching experience
- Facilitating open and ongoing communication
- Fostering positive mentoring relationships
- Control and power in the classroom and school
- When to let the student intern “fail”

WORKSHOP #2

Theme: Making Your Thinking as a Teacher Explicit / Having an Apprentice

Date: September 2, 2004

Specific Topics:

- What is an “apprentice”?
- What is a “master teacher”?
- The master-apprentice model of student teaching
- The applied science model of student teaching
- Connecting theories to practice
- Applying the “Reading Apprenticeship” model to the mentor-intern relationship
- Strategies for making one’s thinking as a teacher explicit: acknowledging difficulties; posing questions; making predictions; explaining personal connections to the work; connecting to other ideas/situations; exploring strategies to mediate difficulties; explaining decisions and results of decisions; showing what “good teachers” do

APPENDIX B—INTERVIEW #2 PROTOCOL

I Looping Back to Previous Interview - Perspectives on Teaching

Just before the school year started I asked you...

- (1) In a phrase or series of phrases, describe your philosophy of teaching. How would you describe this philosophy of teaching today?
- (2) We also discussed what was most influential in you becoming the teacher that you are? (possible probes: your university coursework, your own student teaching, first years of teaching, school administration, colleagues, district). How would you answer that question today?

- (13) We also discussed some longer-term career issues. I asked you how long you see yourself staying in the field of education? What role do you see yourself playing in the field of education in the future/What do you feel you most have to offer? How would you respond today?
- (4) I also asked you to define the term “teacher educator.” How would you define that term today, based on your experiences this year?
- (5) And, based on your experiences, do you believe that a cooperating teacher is a teacher educator? Why/why not?

III Reflecting on Being a Cooperating Teacher

- (6) What decisions did you find yourself making as a cooperating teacher this past year?
- (7) What were your greatest challenges as a cooperating teacher?
- (8) What has been most supportive to you in your role as a cooperating teacher? (possible probes: workshops, group seminars, one-on-one conferencing, website supports). What additional supports would have been helpful to you?
- (9) Based on your experience this past year, what is one caution you would give other teachers who are about to take on the role of cooperating teacher?
- (10) Based on your experience this past year, what advice/insights would you share with someone who is about to take on the role of cooperating teacher?
- (11) Overall, what do you take away with you from participating in this study and project?
- (12) (End of Interview/Open Forum)—Is there anything else you would like to say about being a cooperating teacher, or how it has impacted your thinking about your own position in the field of education?

APPENDIX C—INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & EMERGENT THEMES

Q#9 & 10: What cautions, advice, or insights would you share with someone about to take on the role of being a mentor teacher?

Q#12: Is there anything else you would like to say about being a mentor teacher, or how it is impacted your thinking about your own position in the field of education?

Category: More thoughtful about profession

Times Coded in Interview Data: 8
Times Coded in Field Notes: 4
Times Coded in Website Transcripts: 3

Category: More thoughtful about teaching

Times Coded in Interview Data: 9
Times Coded in Field Notes: 1
Times Coded in Website Transcripts: 3

Category: Reduces isolation/Renewal in collaboration

Times Coded in Interview Data: 11
Times Coded in Field Notes: 1
Times Coded in Website Transcripts: 2

Theme: Teachers with 4–6 years' experience are looking for roles and activities that are *regenerative*—keeping them learning and excited about their teaching.

Q#3: How long do you see yourself staying in the field of education? What role do you see yourself playing in the field of education in the future?/What do you feel you most have to offer?

Category: Working with newer teachers as fostering growth/change

Times Coded in Interview Data: 20

Category: Plans for administration

Times Coded in Interview Data: 15

Times Coded in Field Notes: 1

Category: Economic considerations

Times Coded in Interview Data: 8

Theme: Teachers with 4–6 years' experience are looking for roles and activities that are *generative*—widening their sphere of influence, sharing their gifts to others in the profession.

a. Sub-Theme: In relation to economic considerations and social conditions, the majority of the male teachers were looking to advance financially by moving into educational administration.

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